

# *Who is Israel?*

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## Fore Word

There have been numerous books and articles exploring the answer to this question: one book being *In Search of Israel* by Batya Ruth Wootten and, while I may not agree with all the conclusions found in these books and articles exploring the subject, there is one thing I *DO* agree with: it is necessary that we explore the subject in the Body of Christ.

When most people think of Israel they think of a tiny piece of geography in the Middle East populated by "Jews." This is only the most concrete observable level. In fact, Israel is much more than that both in terms of geography and population.<sup>1</sup>

Dan Gruber wrote in his book, *The Church and the Jews, The Biblical Relationship*:

In the first century, the most heated, controversial, doctrinal issue of all that the Church faced was: "How do the Gentiles fit into all this?" It was a very important issue. Identity, purpose, and destiny depended upon it. It nearly split the early Church. We are nearly two thousand years removed from that time, culture, and the life of the early Church. So it is very difficult for us to fully appreciate the reasons for the controversy and its intensity, but it is very important that we do so.<sup>2</sup>

How DO the Gentile believers fit into all this? What IS their role in God's Master Plan? How does the Gentile believer (the "wild" branch – Romans 11:17) relate with the physical descendants ("natural" branches – Romans 11:24) of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

These are pivotal questions that answers were sought after in the First Century, and, may I postulate, are still being sought after today, particularly in the Messianic Movement that began in the early 70's and continues even now.

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<sup>1</sup> Diane Bahler, *Who is Israel, A Parable*, December 9, 2001, [http://www.ortzion.org/DBahler\\_2.html](http://www.ortzion.org/DBahler_2.html)

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Gruber, *The Church and the Jews*, copyright 1991, General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, MO., page 2



It is reflected in the Messianic sub-movements (may I call them) today of the Two-House Doctrine, the Ephraimite Movement, which seeks to answer that question.

My point is: if adequate answers are to be found, they must be sought after for, as Gruber said, “Identity, purpose, and destiny depended upon it.”<sup>3</sup>

The answer to this question determines not only *who* and *what* we are in the Messiah Jesus, both as natural branches and wild ones, but also what is *expected* of us as branches co-grafted and co-equal in the One Tree.

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<sup>3</sup> IBID.

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## Chapter One - Ya-a-kov (Jacob) the First "Israel"

The first time the name "Israel" is used in the Bible is in Genesis 32:27, 28. After Jacob wrestled with the angel and Jacob would not let go until he received a blessing, the angel said "What is your name?" and he said, "Jacob." And he said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (meaning Prince of God), for you have struggled with God and with men and have prevailed."<sup>4</sup>

It must be remembered that Jacob, the son of Isaac and brother of Esau, was returning to his homeland after years of hiding in a far country for fear of his brother's revenge. Many years before, Jacob had stolen Esau's blessing by deceiving their father, and Esau had vowed to kill him. The name Jacob means "supplanter" which described Jacob's true character in his early life. He had spent most of his adult life reaping what he had sown as others continued to deceive him. Eventually his heart was changed and so was his character.

The name "Israel" was a Spiritual name. It symbolized Jacob's spiritual victory over a life of deception. The human being, Jacob, a natural man, had now been given a spiritual name, "Israel", meaning "Overcomer."<sup>5</sup>

The first "Israel" was just a man who was name Ya-a-kov (Jacob). As we go on, we shall see that the name incorporates others.

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<sup>4</sup> Lorraine Day, M.D., *Who is Israel? Who is the Church?* Copyright 2006  
<http://www.goodnewsaboutgod.com/studies/israel2.htm>

<sup>5</sup> IBID.

## Chapter Two - Israel in Egypt (Mitzraim)

Israel (formerly called Jacob) and his sons moved to Egypt because of a famine in the land of Caanan. Another one of Israel's sons, Joseph, had been sold into slavery by his brothers years before, but now Joseph had been elevated to the leader of Egypt, only surpassed by the Pharaoh.<sup>6</sup>

Exodus 1 says: <sup>1</sup> Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob; they came each one with his household: <sup>2</sup> Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah; <sup>3</sup> Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin; <sup>4</sup> Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher. <sup>5</sup> All the persons who came from the loins of Jacob were seventy in number, but Joseph was *already* in Egypt.

When God speaks to Moses in Exodus 4:21-23, He says to him, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go. "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, `Thus says the LORD, "**Israel is My son**, My firstborn. "So I said to you, `Let My son go that he may serve Me'; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your firstborn."

Now, we see that the **whole nation** (the physical descendants of Jacob) is called "Israel," and the title is not just relegated to Jacob alone.

That "Israel" consists at this point of *only the physical descendants* of Jacob is noted in Exodus 4:29-31, when Moses and Aaron spoke to all the elders of the sons of Israel: "Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped."

This is prior to the plagues and prior to the Passover which will prove to Israel and to Egypt that God is the Lord: "The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the sons of Israel from their midst." (Exodus 7:5)

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<sup>6</sup> IBID.

It will be through these plagues, culminating with the tenth and final plague, the Death of the Firstborn, that God will prove to Egypt that He alone is God.

Notably, it is God that makes a distinction between His people Israel and the Egyptians (Exodus 9:4; 11:7) as He puts the plagues upon the land. This would have been noticed by all in Egypt, both of Israel and the Egyptians.

At the time, “Israel” consisted primarily of the *physical descendants* of Abraham, Isaac, and **Jacob**. They lived in the Land of Goshen on the Nile Delta of Egypt.

It IS possible that others joined themselves to Israel in while in Egypt (I shall talk about that when we look at Caleb the son of **Jephunneh**).

Nevertheless, the group identified as Israel during the sojourn in Egypt was those physical descendants (sons) of Jacob.

Yet, again, as time goes on, this name shall be expanded to include others not of the physical descendants.

## Chapter Three - The Exodus & The Wilderness

When Israel left Egypt, we discover that it was not only the physical descendants of Jacob who left, but also another group of people known as the “mixed multitude.” Exodus 12:37 and 38 says, “Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. A **mixed** multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock.”

Who was this “Mixed multitude?”

We get an idea from verses 43-49 of this same chapter:

<sup>43</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no **foreigner** is to eat of it; <sup>44</sup> but every man's slave purchased with money, after you have circumcised him, then he may eat of it. <sup>45</sup> "A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it. <sup>46</sup> "It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it. <sup>47</sup> "All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. <sup>48</sup> "But if a **stranger sojourns** with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. <sup>49</sup> "The same law shall apply to the native as to the **stranger who sojourns** among you."

The “mixed multitude” were those who were not the physical descendants of Jacob, yet were those who joined themselves to Israel as they left Egypt. They were known as the “sojourner,” the “stranger” or the “stranger who sojourns” among you.

In Hebrew parlance, they were the “gerim.” In today’s vernacular, they are “proselytes.”

A thing of note: in the Torah they are said to be given the same law (Torah) as that of the physical descendants of Jacob:

Exodus 12:49 - "The **same law** shall apply to the native as to the **stranger who sojourns** among you."

Leviticus 24:22 - 'There shall be **one standard** for you; it shall be for the **stranger** as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God.' "

Numbers 9:14 – “If an alien sojourns among you and observes the Passover to the LORD, according to the statute of the Passover and according to its ordinance, so he shall do; you shall have **one statute**, both for the alien and for the **native** of the land.”

There is not going to be one set of laws for the native (physical descendants of Jacob) and another set of laws for the stranger, alien, or sojourner. In God’s people, there is going to be just one standard, just one set of laws, one set of responsibilities and privileges! Just one covenant!

When God gathered the sons of Israel at the mountain to receive the Torah in Exodus 19, He gathered **all** those who left Egypt!

It says: “<sup>1</sup> In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai. <sup>2</sup> When they set out from Rephidim, they came to the wilderness of Sinai and camped in the wilderness; and there Israel camped in front of the mountain. <sup>3</sup> Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel: <sup>4</sup> 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself. <sup>5</sup> 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

He didn’t separate out the “Mixed multitude” from the native and say to them, “Since you are not the physical descendants of Jacob this Torah doesn’t apply to you!”

He calls them all His own possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation if they would obey His voice and keep His covenant!

No. I believe that God makes it perfectly clear that they were all in this together! Not only for the receiving of the **one Torah** at the mountain, but later, as they enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, the receiving of a portion of the Land with all the physical descendants of Israel!

We read about the 12 spies that Moses sent into the Land to spy it out. Two of the 12 spies sent to spy out the land were Joshua, the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

Numbers 13:

<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, <sup>2</sup> "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them." <sup>3</sup> So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel. <sup>4</sup> These then *were* their names: from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur; <sup>5</sup> from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori; <sup>6</sup> **from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh...**"

As we recall from the passage, ten of the spies brought back a bad report; not because the Land was barren, but because the people in the Land were threatening (Numbers 13):

<sup>25</sup> When they returned from spying out the land, at the end of forty days, <sup>26</sup> they proceeded to come to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the sons of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh; and they brought back word to them and to all the congregation and showed them the fruit of the land. <sup>27</sup> Thus they told him, and said, "We went in to the land where you sent us; and it certainly does flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. <sup>28</sup> "Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified *and* very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. <sup>29</sup> "Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan."

<sup>30</sup> Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it." <sup>31</sup> But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us." <sup>32</sup> So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of *great* size. <sup>33</sup> "There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the

Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

It was Caleb who stood up and said that Israel should go and take the Land.

But the people sided with the ten spies who had brought a bad report (Numbers 14):

<sup>1</sup> Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> "Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" <sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt."

At that, in Numbers 14:6, it says, "Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes..."

As a result of the unbelief of the people, God says: <sup>27</sup> "How long *shall I bear* with this evil congregation who are grumbling against Me? I have heard the complaints of the sons of Israel, which they are making against Me. <sup>28</sup> "Say to them, 'As I live,' says the LORD, 'just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will surely do to you; <sup>29</sup> your corpses will fall in this wilderness, even all your numbered men, according to your complete number from twenty years old and upward, who have grumbled against Me. 'Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except **Caleb the son of Jephunneh** and Joshua the son of Nun."

Only two people of that whole generation would go into the Land: Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. All the others would perish in the Wilderness.

Now, it is easy to pass by an important thing that needs to be illuminated at this point: "Who is Caleb?"

We may have thought that he was of the tribe of Judah (a "natural" branch or "native") since that is the tribe he was sent out from to spy the Land (Numbers 13):

<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying, <sup>2</sup> "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them... <sup>6</sup> **from the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh...**"

But was Caleb, the son of Jephunneh *descended* from the tribe of Judah?

Not according to Numbers 32:11 and 12 it says, 'None of the men who came up from Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob; for they did not follow Me fully, except **Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite** and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have followed the LORD fully.'

And in Joshua 14:6 it says:

"Then the sons of Judah drew near to Joshua in Gilgal, and **Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite** said to him, "You know the word which the LORD spoke to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh-barnea."

Caleb was NOT physically descended from Judah, but was a **Kenizzite!**

Caleb was the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite. What tribe is that? It is not a tribe of Israel at all. Caleb's father evidently was one who had joined himself to the Jewish people (tribe of Judah) as they left Egypt. He was among the ones who had joined himself with the people of Israel as part of the "Mixed Multitude" in Exodus 12:37-38.

According to the *Holman Bible Dictionary* the Kenizzites were a

Clan God promised Abraham the Israelites would dispossess (Genesis 15:19). The Kenizzites lived in the Negev, the southern desert region of Judah, before the conquest of the land by Joshua. The tribe of Judah absorbed some of the Kenizzites while Edom absorbed others. The Kenizzites were probably related to the Kenites from whom they would have learned the craft of metal-working (1 Chronicles 4:13-14). They probably derived their name from Kenaz—a descendant of Esau (Genesis 36:11, Genesis 36:15)—who is listed among the Edomite chieftains (Genesis 36:42). Jephunneh the Kenizzite may have

married a woman of the tribe of Judah. Their son was Caleb (Numbers 32:12; Joshua 14:6, Joshua 14:14; Joshua 15:13).<sup>7</sup>

Hence, what we see is that the only ones from that generation who left Egypt that would enter into the Promised Land would be Joshua, a “natural” branch and Caleb, a “wild” branch!

Isn't that remarkable?

God brings both a “Jew” and a “Gentile” (better yet, a sojourner – “Ger”) together from that generation as one into the Promised Land!

**BOTH** have a part in Israel and in God's Plan!

When it came time to select a representative from among the tribes, it was this Caleb that Moses selected. This "grafted-in" one was considered "a prince" among his tribe, the clan of Judah. So close was the relationship of Caleb with the true Israelites, that he was given a choice inheritance in the land. He in fact, defended his right to an inheritance that was according to his position as a full-fledged member of the people of Israel. Once one has been joined to Israel, there is no distinction of Jew or Gentile any longer. Even the Passover meal is eaten only by Israelites, but scripture makes it clear that all who have come and joined themselves to the people of Israel are to be treated as equal with the true Jews.<sup>8</sup>

As Israel goes into the Land, we see others who are gathered into her: Rahab, the harlot and her household (Joshua 6):

<sup>17</sup> "The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; **only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live**, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. <sup>22</sup> Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "**Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there**, as you have sworn to her." <sup>23</sup> So the young men who were spies went in and **brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel.** <sup>24</sup> They burned

<sup>7</sup> Holman Bible Dictionary, *KENIZZITE*, published by Broadman & Holman, 1991.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Catlin, *The Place of Your Grafting*, Volume 1 Number 3 July 11, 2003, Messiah's Branch, [http://www.messiahsbranch.org/articles/art\\_place\\_of\\_grafting.htm](http://www.messiahsbranch.org/articles/art_place_of_grafting.htm)

the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. <sup>25</sup> However, ***Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day,*** for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

We see later in the Gospel of Matthew (1:5) in the genealogy of Jesus that: “Salmon was the father of Boaz by **Rahab**, Boaz was the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse.”

**Rahab thus became a part of Israel.**

Others, too shall come to join Israel in the Land, such as Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1:16, 22):

But **Ruth** said, "Do not urge me to leave you {or} turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people {shall be} my people, and your God, my God...So Naomi returned, and with her **Ruth** the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Israel will always have her Rahabs, Ruths and sojourners (gerim)! Those are they who make the people of Israel their people and the God of Israel their God!

If you are of God's people, you are also part of Israel!

## Chapter Four - The Sojourners (Gerim)

When Caleb, Joshua and the children of the generation that left Egypt entered the Land, there was no formal procedure set in place to incorporate the sojourners into the people or nation of Israel.

However, as time progressed, among the communities of Israel in the Land, we shall begin to see a movement in Judaism formalizing the conversion of a Gentile into a full-member status of the people of Israel.

Whereas once it was assumed from the Scripture that a sojourner was a distinct, but equal member of the community of Israel by association with Israel, a more ritualized process of conversion came into being which facilitated the integration of the former Gentile (pagan) into a status of a "Full Jew" (Jew by Choice).

There is no place in the Hebrew Bible where the term "*ger*" is clearly used to refer to a convert to Judaism. The closest thing in the Hebrew Bible to a conversion process is the circumcision undergone by the male stranger ("*ger*") before eating the Passover offering (Exodus 12:48). Another passage which may be relevant to a process of conversion involves non-Jewish women captured in war. (Deut 21:10-14) Such women could be adopted forcibly as wives, but first they had to have their heads shaved and undergo a period of mourning.<sup>9</sup>

That there was such a group of converts to Judaism, a fourth division of the people of Israel (Priests, Levites, people of Israel and sojourners - gerim) is evidenced in the *Damascus Document*, the name given to one of the works found in the Dead Sea scrolls of the Qumran.

Martha Himmelfarb in her book *A Kingdom of Priests* writes:

The only Biblical precedent I know for such a four-fold division of the people of Israel is Hezekiah's Passover in Chronicles, which mentions not only "the whole assembly that came out of Israel," but also "the sojourners [gerim] who came out of the land of Israel and the sojourners [gerim] who dwelt in

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<sup>9</sup> *Conversion to Judaism*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ger\\_tzedek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ger_tzedek)

the land of Judah” (2 Chronicles 30:25). As we have seen in the Bible the *ger* is usually a non-Israelite who has come to live among the Israelites. As a concept of conversion emerges during the Second Temple period, the term *ger* comes to be used of converts, proselytes. The picture in the *Damascus Document* of a group of *gerim* parallel to the priests, Levites, and children of Israel certainly points to an understanding of the *ger* as proselyte. The only other reference to the category in the Damascus Document, “to support the poor, destitute, and proselyte” (CD 6.21), is not decisive but points in this direction.<sup>10</sup>

In Judaism, it is determined that there are two distinct groups of converts or proselytes: the “full proselyte” (*ger tzedek*) and the “half-proselyte” (*ger toshav*).

In the Talmud, “*ger*” is used in two senses: *ger tzedek* refers to a “righteous convert”, a proselyte to Judaism, and *ger toshav*, a non-Jewish inhabitant of the Land of Israel who observes the Seven Laws of Noah and has repudiated all links with idolatry.<sup>11</sup>

The Seven Laws of Noah are determined by the commandments given between Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 and are (as listed by the Talmud):

1. Prohibition of Idolatry: You shall not have any idols before God.
2. Prohibition of Murder: You shall not murder. (Genesis 9:6)
3. Prohibition of Theft: You shall not steal.
4. Prohibition of Sexual Promiscuity: You shall not commit any of a series of sexual prohibitions, which include adultery, incest, bestiality and male homosexual intercourse.
5. Prohibition of Blasphemy: You shall not blaspheme God's name.
6. Dietary Law: Do not eat flesh taken from an animal while it is still alive. (Genesis 9:4)
7. Requirement to have just Laws: You shall set up an effective judiciary to enforce the preceding six laws fairly.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006, page 123

<sup>11</sup> *IBID.*

<sup>12</sup> Talmud Sanhedrin 56

The *ger toshav* (Noachide) accepts the Seven Laws of Noah, repudiates idolatry, and is allowed to carry out as many of the other commandments (613 in all) as he or she chooses. In the case of a male, circumcision is not required of the Noachide.

A non-Jew who keeps the Noahide Laws in all their details is said to attain the same spiritual and moral level as Israel's own Kohen Gadol (high priest).<sup>13</sup> Maimonides states in his work *Mishneh Torah*<sup>14</sup> that a non-Jew who is precise in the observance of these Seven Noahide commandments is considered to be a *Righteous Gentile* and has earned a place in the world to come. This follows a similar statement in the Talmud.<sup>15</sup>

So far as “salvation” is concerned, it is believed in Judaism that the Noachide, the *ger toshav*, a non-Jewish inhabitant of the Land of Israel who observes the Seven Laws of Noah and has repudiated all links with idolatry has earned a place in the “world to come” – “*olam ha ba.*”

In other words, he or she is “saved” or as Christians put it, “goes to Heaven,” but he is not a Jew.

The *ger tzedek* is one who has embraced Judaism in its fullest sense, accepts the “yoke” of the Torah, and in the case of a male, is circumcised among other things and is regarded as a “Jew.”

Today, *ger* refers to a convert to Judaism. However, after a person completes a formal conversion, rabbinic attitude is that he or she should not be referred to as a convert (or *ger*), but as a citizen, or full member of the Jewish community, and he or she should not be reminded of their earlier lifestyle.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Talmud, Bava Kamma 38a

<sup>14</sup> *The Laws of Kings* 8:11

<sup>15</sup> Sanhedrin 105b

<sup>16</sup> *Conversion to Judaism*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ger\\_tzedek](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ger_tzedek)

## Chapter Five - The Messianic Faith of the First Century

During the earthly life of Jesus, He did *not* minister to the non-Jew. As He so clearly stated in Matthew 15:24, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the nation of Israel."

In truth, *NO* outreach was done to Gentiles during the lifetime of Jesus on this earth. In fact, when He sent His disciples into the cities of Israel, He warned them in Matthew 10:5, 6, "Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; <sup>6</sup> but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Only *after* the death and resurrection of Jesus, did He give the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 which said, "Go therefore and *make disciples of all the nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Yet, for all that, *no* outreach would begin to the non-Jews for roughly 10 years following the death and resurrection of our Lord and the "birth of the Church in Acts 2!"

On the Day of Shavuot (Pentecost), a pilgrimage feast, *only Jews and proselytes* (full converts to Judaism) came (Acts 2) to what is now called "the birth of the Church":

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place...  
<sup>5</sup> Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup> And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. <sup>7</sup> They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> "And how is it that we each hear *them* in our own language to which we were born?" <sup>9</sup> "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup> Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, *both Jews and proselytes*..."

It would not be until Kefa (Peter) was called in a vision to go to Cornelius' (a half-proselyte) house to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10),

that it was understood that non-full-proselyte Gentile “*God fearers*” would have a place in this new faith!

Even then, Peter had to be convinced by God in a vision that he should go to proclaim that Good News to them!

Acts 10:

<sup>1</sup> Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort, <sup>2</sup> a *devout man* and one who *feared God* with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually. <sup>3</sup> About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had *just* come in and said to him, "Cornelius!" <sup>4</sup> And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God. <sup>5</sup> "Now dispatch *some* men to Joppa and send for a man *named* Simon, who is also called Peter; <sup>6</sup> he is staying with a tanner *named* Simon, whose house is by the sea." <sup>7</sup> When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants, <sup>8</sup> and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

<sup>9</sup> On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. <sup>10</sup> But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance; <sup>11</sup> and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground, <sup>12</sup> and there were in it all *kinds of* four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air. <sup>13</sup> A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" <sup>14</sup> But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean." <sup>15</sup> Again a voice *came* to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy." <sup>16</sup> This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

<sup>17</sup> Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate; <sup>18</sup> and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there. <sup>19</sup> While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup> "But get up, go

downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself." <sup>21</sup> Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?" <sup>22</sup> They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear a message from you." <sup>23</sup> So he invited them in and gave them lodging. **And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.**

<sup>24</sup> On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup> When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped *him*. <sup>26</sup> But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am *just* a man." <sup>27</sup> As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled. <sup>28</sup> And he said to them, "***You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.***" <sup>29</sup> "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me."

Here, Cornelius, a "God Fearer" and his household is given the opportunity to come to a full salvation through faith in Jesus! He was not circumcised, and yet, God heard his prayers and sent Peter to testify to them about Jesus.

As they heard the Gospel message, the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they spoke in tongues, even as 10 years earlier, on Shavuot (Pentecost), the Spirit fell on the Jewish men and proselytes who gathered in Jerusalem.

It would be because of the experience on Pentecost that Peter understood that these Gentiles were saved too!

And it would be this experience that Peter would relate to when on the First Jerusalem Council he would take his stand against the "Judaizers" of the day came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "***Unless you are circumcised*** according to the custom of Moses, ***you cannot be saved.***" (Acts 15:1)

Peter took his stand and said, "7 ...Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear

the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup> "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; <sup>9</sup> and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? <sup>11</sup> "***But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.***" (Acts 15)

Now, because of the theology of the Church today taking this passage out of context, we must be reminded that the issue was: "***Unless you are circumcised*** according to the custom of Moses, ***you cannot be saved.***"

It is important to remember here that the intention of the Law was never to make one righteous (hence the sacrificial system). Instead, its teaching was two-fold: ***it taught how one became a part of the covenant community of God through grace*** (Deuteronomy 7:7-9; cf Ephesians 2:8-9) and ***how a person was to behave within this covenant community.***

Both Jew and Gentile alike are brought into covenant community by *grace alone* and not by works, yet, it is through a person's obedience to the commandments found within the covenant that he *proves* he is part of the covenant community. How many commandments a covenant person keeps or ignores does not make him more or less righteous than another covenant person. It is by faith alone that righteousness is imputed (Genesis 15:6; cf Romans 4:3, 9; Galatians 3:6, James 2:23).

The Jew is made righteous by the same standard as the full proselyte and non-convert: by the standard of faith found in Romans 9:30-33. Yet, obedience to God's commandments is *assumed* of the faithful (Genesis 26:5; cf James 2:14-26).

In Acts 21:20, we see that the Jewish believing community WAS zealous for the Torah and when Paul (Shaul) came the leaders (including James, the brother of Jesus) of that community spoke to him and said, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all ***zealous for the Law...***"

What were these Jewish believers saved by? The Law? NO, by Faith! But a true Biblical faith has works!

James, the brother of Jesus writes (James 2):

<sup>14</sup> What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for *their* body, what use is that? <sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, *being* by itself.

<sup>18</sup> But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." <sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. <sup>20</sup> But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? <sup>21</sup> Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; <sup>23</sup> and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? <sup>26</sup> For just as the body without *the* spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.

The spirit of your faith IS works! If you don't have the works – you better be checking if you have a true Biblical faith!

Jesus said, "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord' if you don't keep My commandments?" (Luke 6:46)

Part and parcel of calling Jesus "Lord" is obedience. This too is part of "sanctification."

Nevertheless, obedience should be done, not out of a sense of works-righteousness – but out of the motive of a heart-felt love for Him.

Loving God IS keeping His commandments:

The Lord says in John 14:15 - "If you **love** Me, you will **keep** My **commandments**."

This is not unusual or unique to the “New” Testament. It is found in the “Old” Testament as well:

Deuteronomy 11:1 - "You shall therefore **love** the LORD your God, and always **keep** His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His **commandments**.

Deuteronomy 30:15-16 - <sup>15</sup> "See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; <sup>16</sup> in that I command you today to **love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments**, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it."

*If we truly love Him, then we will desire to obey Him! This is part and parcel of sanctification, too!*

All believers should be desirous of being faithful to God’s commandments due to a sense of gratitude and love for Him (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). All should desire to move from a less holy behavior to a more holy behavior. This can only be accomplished by following God’s commandments as laid out in the whole Bible.

Again, the Acts 15 Council only dealt with the issue of salvation for the Gentiles! This has *NOTHING* to do with the walk of the believer (Jew or non-Jew) *AFTER* one is SAVED!

Why do I have to emphasize this? It is because the Church at large teaches that “Jesus did away with the Law” by “fulfilling the Law” and that “we are under grace and not under the Law” and don’t have to keep its commandments (except perhaps the 10 Commandments).

The point of the First Jerusalem Council was “How are non-Jews SAVED?”

The answer?

They are “saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus,” as were the Jewish believers! There is *NO* distinction! *ALL* are saved by faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus. Period. End of story!

Yet, it behooved the Council that “we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,<sup>20</sup> but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.” (Acts 15:19, 20)

So, they sent this letter through Paul, Barnabas, and Silas to the Gentiles:

<sup>23</sup> "The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.  
<sup>24</sup>"Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with *their* words, unsettling your souls,<sup>25</sup> it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,<sup>26</sup> men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>27</sup>"Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word *of mouth*.<sup>28</sup>"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:<sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15)

It would seem that all the non-Jew had to do from then on was to follow these four things. However, if the Acts 15 injunction were *all* there was for a Gentile believer to observe, why did Paul put even *one* single verse of the Torah, the Writings, or the Prophets in *any* of his writings to the Gentiles? For instance, in Romans 4:3 he cites Genesis 15:6; in Romans 3:10 he cites Psalm 53:3; in Romans 11:26 he cites Isaiah 59:20; in 1 Corinthians 9:9 he cites Deuteronomy 25:4; in 1 Corinthians 15:32 he quotes Isaiah 22:13; in 1 Corinthians 3:20 he cites Psalm 94:11. Get the point? If *all* a Gentile believer had to do was found in Acts 15, he or she wouldn't need to *know or do* anything more.

Yet, an often overlooked passage sits right there in verse 21:

"For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

What does that mean?

Well, since there were NO Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Lutheran Church (or any other church for that matter) down the street, where do you think the non-Jewish believer began to congregate?

Of course, the synagogue! And just what would the non-Jewish believer hear in the synagogue every Sabbath in every city?

MOSES! He would hear the Torah!

And since Torah all along was given to BOTH Israel AND the sojourner, the new believer in Jesus would begin to hear the other commandments given to all the people of God.

This begins the process of SANCTIFICATION!

You *are* saved and are *being* saved by your FAITH in Jesus alone! You are being *SANCTIFIED* by your *WALK* with Jesus!

These are two distinct, but conjoined processes!

To ALL believers, John writes in 1 John 2:1-6:

<sup>1</sup> My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; <sup>2</sup> and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.

<sup>3</sup> By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: <sup>6</sup> ***the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.***

If you say that you're a believer in Jesus, you need to "walk" like Jesus!

So, how *DID* Jesus walk?

Well, the Scripture says in Hebrews 4:15 that Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, "*yet without sin.*"

It goes on to say in 1 John 3:4: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”

In the King James Version the same verse is translated: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

In short, Jesus did NOT transgress the Law of God!

It must be remembered that Jesus was *totally* obedient to the commandments as pertained to an Israelite (a citizen of Israel). As believers in him, we are all made part of that same commonwealth (Ephesians 2:11-22) whether we are Jew or non-Jew. Because of this, all the laws of this community apply to all within the community. The sojourner follows the same laws as the native. There are no separate laws for Jews and another set of laws for non-Jews; we are all one.

Now, I realize that we will *all* fall short of what Jesus would have done (that is what sin is) and won't always do what He did. Yet, having said that, we often excuse ourselves in our sin by saying, “I'm just human...” or, as the saying that was popularized by Flip Wilson goes, “The Devil made me do it...” and we go on sinning anyway as if we have no choice.

Well, Scripture says we *have* a choice: the choice to do good; the choice to do what He did. This choice is the choice to be free from the bondage of sin. There was a time in our lives before we became believers in Him that we had no choice. We were in bondage to sin (Romans 6) and sin reigned over us, but now we are freed from sin (verse 18). We have a choice to do as Jesus did!

When we say that we are believers in Him, we are saying that we will walk as He walked. Not only must we walk His walk in the more obvious ways, but we must learn to walk His walk in those less obvious ways that are just as important to holy living. If we don't, we are making the Messiah a partaker in our sin.

When we sin, He is in us; He is partaking with us: we are defiling His temple. I am sure He doesn't like that, though He realizes as believers we will sin from time-to-time. We often ignorantly sin because we don't know the Scriptures as we ought or were mis-told.

Sometimes, we do it deliberately; even though we know what the Scripture says. But when we truly repent of our sin (turn around from our sin), ask forgiveness for our sin and choose to do what is right, God will forgive us and heal us.

Over the last several years, a popular item among Christian children (and some adults, I might add) has been a wrist band with the initials “WWJD?” This acronym stands for the words, “What Would Jesus Do?”

While I am not being critical of the practice of wearing things like these to remind us to live holy lives (in fact, I wear one myself), I think that people who promote the wearing of these items sometimes often fail to realize the scope of what they are saying.

Since Jesus showed us by his life how an Israelite is to live, the acronym “WWJD” is quite appropriate. When confronted by various situations in life, we *should* ask “WWJD?” What Would Jesus Do? When examining the Scripture, what day would the Lord rest on? WWJD? Where would He be on the Sabbath day? WWJD? What kind of things would He eat? WWJD? Would Jesus celebrate the pagan practices of the Caananites or other peoples surrounding Israel? “WWJD?”

If we didn’t know the answer, where would we turn to find it? Of course, we would go to the “Old Testament,” the TANAKH, since that was all He had.

Having now found the answer in Scripture, the person wearing the “WWJD” band implies that they will follow what He would have done in the *same* situation.

If we are to “walk like” Jesus (True Israel), we must desire to do the same walk!

## Chapter Six -The Church Usurps the Title Israel

(Replacement Theology/ Dispensationalism/ Supersessionism)

Replacement theology essentially teaches that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan. Adherents of replacement theology believe the Jews are no longer God's chosen people, and God does not have specific future plans for the nation of Israel. All the different views of the relationship between the church and Israel can be divided into two camps: either the Church is a continuation of Israel (replacement theology / covenant theology), or the Church is completely different and distinct from Israel (dispensationalism / premillennialism).

Replacement theology teaches that the Church is the replacement for Israel and that the many promises made to Israel in the Bible are fulfilled in the Christian Church, not in Israel. So, the prophecies in Scripture concerning the blessing and restoration of Israel to the Promised Land are "spiritualized" or "allegorized" into promises of God's blessing for the Church. Major problems exist with this view, such as the continuing existence of the Jewish people throughout the centuries and especially with the revival of the modern state of Israel. If Israel has been condemned by God, and there is no future for the Jewish nation, how do we explain the supernatural survival of the Jewish people over the past 2000 years despite the many attempts to destroy them? How do we explain why and how Israel reappeared as a nation in the 20th century after not existing for 1900 years?<sup>17</sup>

The early Christian theologians saw Christianity as a replacement of Israel. Historically, statements on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church have claimed her ecclesiastical structures to be a replacement of Israel. Modern Catholicism continues to affirm these spokesmen as authoritative for doctrine, alongside the New Testament. On the other hand, modern Protestants holding to covenant theology or dispensationalism explicitly

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<sup>17</sup> Got Questions Ministries, <http://www.gotquestions.org/replacement-theology.html>, Copyright 2002-2009

affirm a continuing relationship between God and Israel, within their respective frameworks for understanding the Bible.

In his 1965 PhD thesis Peter Richardson wrote on the discussion of the relationship between the early church and the identity of Israel. One of the conclusions of his thesis was that 'Israel' was first applied or appropriated to the church by Justin Martyr in the 160s.

"It is a symptom of the developing take-over by Christians of the prerogatives and privileges of Jews"<sup>18</sup>

A.D. 160 corresponds roughly with the beginning of the new attitude to Judaism. Prior to this time there is a measure of continuity between the Church and Israel: they are able to talk together, ... to worship together, ... but after the mid-second century these possibilities seem to disappear and discontinuity becomes more radical."<sup>19</sup>

"We are the true Israelitic race ... the seed of Jacob now referred to is something else, and not, as may be supposed, spoken of your people ...there are two seeds of Judah, and two races, as there are two houses of Jacob: the one begotten by blood and flesh, the other by faith and the Spirit."<sup>20</sup> (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*)

How did the thinking in the Church change toward Israel? Slowly, the Gentile majority in the Church began to view Israel as a relic of the past. With spiritual competition between the two groups, we can see why the Church adopted the view that it was the new Israel. The view of the Church was that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD was brought about divinely, that God had ordained the end of Jewish unbelieving Israel. Since Jerusalem was in ruins and the Jewish people were scattered throughout the world, it seemed evident that God was finished with national Israel. Theologians now proposed that Israel in the Scriptures did not really mean literal Israel, instead, it meant the Church. The Church now became

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Richardson, *Israel in the Apostolic Church*, CUP, 1969, p.1

<sup>19</sup> IBID.

<sup>20</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 135

the new Israel and through this spiritualization, wherever blessings are spoken of to Israel in the Old Testament, it was interpreted to mean the Church. In essence they simply replaced Israel with the Church.

Replacement Theology became the position of the Church during the time of Augustine (A.D. 354-430), who popularized it in his book *The City of God*. Initially Augustine claimed that he was a Chiliast, the belief in the literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, the basic view of Premillennialism today. Having come to the conclusion that this view was "inferior" and "carnal," he adopted the position that the reign of Christ should be much more "spiritual" and it would occur during this present Church Age. His spiritualizing method, of course, eliminated true Israel and the losing of all the promises God made to the Jewish nation, which he viewed as now being fulfilled within the Church.<sup>21</sup>

**Supersessionism** (British English: **supersessionism**) and **replacement theology** are particular interpretations of New Testament claims, viewing God's relationship with Christians as being either the "replacement" or "completion" of the promise made to the Jews (or Israelites) and Jewish Proselytes. Biblical expressions of God's relationships with people are known as *covenants*, so the contentious element of supersessionism is the idea that the New Covenant with the Christians and the Christian Church somehow "replaces" or "completes" the Mosaic Covenant (or Torah) with the Israelites and B'nei Noah.<sup>22</sup>

This gets me to the heart of the matter with this doctrine: that the doctrine that the New Covenant somehow replaces or completes or does away with the Mosaic covenant.

In Christendom believers think that because they are in the "New" Testament there is a whole new set of Laws to go by. That, when Jesus fulfilled the Law, He somehow did away with it.

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<sup>21</sup> Alan Torres, *Replacement Theology*, <http://www.biblicist.org/bible/replace.shtml>

<sup>22</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supersessionism>

However, this is contrary to what Jesus Himself said in Matthew 5:17-21:

**Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or stroke will pass from the Torah – not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of Heaven.**

David Bivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr. in their book, *Understanding the difficult words of Jesus*, seeks to address a misunderstanding in the body of Messiah regarding the terms “abolish” and “fulfill”:

**In Matthew 5:17, Jesus claims he has no intention of abolishing or suspending the Mosaic Law. For most Christians, this comes as a shock. After all, did not the Apostle Paul say, “Christ is the end of the Law” (Romans 10:4)? Jesus’ statement seems such a contradiction that many Christian commentators have tried to explain it away by suggesting that his words do not really mean what they seem to mean. Their attempts are futile.**

**The meaning of Jesus’ words is clear. As long as the world lasts, he goes on to say in verse 18, the Law will last. Here Jesus is in complete agreement with the Rabbis: “Everything has an end heaven and earth have an end except one thing which has no end. And what is that? The Law” (Genesis Rabbah 10:1); “No letter will ever be abolished from the Law” (Exodus Rabbah 6:1), “Should the world unite to uproot one word of the Law, they would be unable to do it” (Leviticus Rabbah 19:2).**

**... Undoubtedly, in trying to understand this passage, everything hinges on the meaning of the words “destroy” and “fulfill” In verse 17. What does Jesus mean by “destroying the law” and “fulfilling the Law?”**

**“Destroy” and “fulfill” are technical terms used in rabbinical argumentation. When a rabbi felt that a**

colleague had misinterpreted a passage of Scripture, he would say, “You are destroying the Law!” Needless to say, in most cases his colleague strongly disagreed. What was “destroying the Law” for one rabbi, was “fulfilling the Law” (correctly interpreting Scripture) for another.

What we see in Matthew 5:17ff is a rabbinical discussion. Someone has accused Jesus of “destroying” the Law. Of course, neither Jesus nor his accuser would ever think of literally destroying the Law. Furthermore, it would never enter the accuser’s mind to charge Jesus with intent to abolish part or all of the Mosaic Law. What is being called into question is Jesus’ system of interpretation, the way he interprets Scripture.

When accused, Jesus strongly denies that his method of interpreting Scripture “destroys” or weakens its meaning. He claims, on the contrary, to be more orthodox than his accuser. For Jesus, a “light” commandment (“Do not bear hatred in your heart”) is as important as a “heavy” commandment (“Do not murder”). And a disciple who breaks even a “light” commandment will be considered “light” (have an inferior position) in Jesus’ movement (Matthew 5:19).

“Never imagine for a moment,” Jesus says, “that I intend to abrogate the Law by misinterpreting it. My intent is not to weaken or negate the Law, but by properly interpreting God’s written Word I aim to establish it, that is, make it even more lasting. I would never invalidate the Law by effectively removing something from it through misinterpretation.

Heaven and earth would sooner disappear than something disappear from the Law. Not the smallest letter in the alphabet, the yod, nor even its decorative spur, will ever disappear from the Law.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *Understanding the difficult words of Jesus*, David Bivin & Roy Blizzard, Jr., CENTER FOR BIBLICAL ANALYSIS, Division of DESTINY IMAGE PUBLISHERS, Shippensburg, PA, Copyright 1984, pages 154-155

Furthermore Jesus warns us against *anyone* who nullifies even the least of the commandments and so teaches others. **“If anyone disobeys the least of these mitzvot,”** He says, **“he will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches others will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”**

If there is any New Testament passage that wholeheartedly supports what was written in the Law in the lives of believers, this is it. This means that no one (short of God Himself) has the authority to annul, abolish, destroy, change, or set aside the Law – not Peter, not Paul, not James, nor any other man! And since Jesus didn’t do it, then no one else has the authority to do it either!

Those who say that Paul’s writings support an anti-Nomian (anti-Law) stance have only to look back to Jesus’ statement in Matthew 5. If Paul *was* against the keeping of the Law in the life of a New Testament believer, then he *is* least in the kingdom of heaven! (I personally do not believe that he is anti-Law, nor least in the Kingdom. For more information regarding Paul, please read my book, *The Problem with Paul*)

### **NOT a “Spiritual Jew”**

Now, I want to close this chapter with a most important point! I have spoken to many Christians who try to use Paul’s words in Romans 2:29 to defend their position that as Christians they are “spiritual Jews.”

Paul writes: “But he is a **Jew** who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”

In this book I have tried to point out that those who are the wild grafted-in branches of believers in Jesus are now a part of Israel and are subject to the Torah as believers, as is Israel!

This is NOT to say that these wild grafted in branches as somehow “spiritual Jews.”

It must be remembered that Judah, from which we get the word Jew, was simply one tribe of Israel! After the Babylonian captivity, the

prominent tribe that returned from Captivity was that of Judah, by which all those who were of the physical descent of Jacob (Israel) were given the generic name “Jew.”

I know people who are named “Cohen,” “Levi,” “Levitz,” “Levine,” Katz,” “Benjamin” and others who are known as “Jewish.” They are not technically “Jews” as they carry their tribe in their name!

Cohen and Katz are from Aaron’s descent and are priests and Levites, Levi, Levitz, Levine and their variants are from the tribe of Levi! Benjamin is of the tribe of Benjamin.

They are NOT “Jews” either!

Well, neither are non-Jewish believers “*Jews*” spiritual or otherwise.

Just as Levites, priests, Benjamin and others from other tribes are not “Jews,” but are of Israel, so too are the non-Jews who are grafted in by faith into Israel!

They are now “of Israel” and are a part of the physical/spiritual nation consisting of natural and wild branches (as it always has since the Exodus when the mixed multitude joined themselves with the physical descendants of Israel).

It is bad practice to take any passage of Scripture out of context, and especially this one in Romans, which Christians over the centuries have used to defend their ill treatment of the physical descendants of Israel (“Jews” used in the pejorative sense) because they are “spiritual Jews” (“Jews” as used in the replacement sense).

Christians calling themselves “spiritual Jews” are most often indicating that now we are the real “Jews” because of our faith in Jesus and those who are of the physical sense, who rejected Jesus are no longer favored as Jews in God’s eyes.

This is exactly the attitude that Paul was trying to avoid in his writing to the Christian believers in Romans 11:

<sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not ***be arrogant toward the branches***; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.

Here Paul says, "...do not be arrogant toward...[the natural branches]."

He is definitely speaking to the right people here, as if in a prophetic sense, since the Catholic Church has often been the prominent group who initiated the persecution of the Jews through the centuries – and whose arrogant attitude of "we have replaced Israel" began, as I previously wrote in this Chapter, with their Early Church Fathers.

However, if I were to go with their argument as replacement Israel and "spiritual Jews" and say that this is true, then all the more reason why they should keep the Torah of God as expressed in the "Old Testament!"

Why? Because God spoke to Israel in Deuteronomy 28 and gave them a choice of life or death; blessings and life for keeping His commandments as He had given them to that point and cursings and death for not keeping them!

Let's read it:

<sup>1</sup> "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, ***being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today***, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup> "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you ***if you obey the LORD*** your God:

<sup>3</sup> "Blessed *shall you be* in the city, and blessed *shall you be* in the country.

<sup>4</sup> "Blessed *shall be* the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

<sup>5</sup> "Blessed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl.

<sup>6</sup> "Blessed *shall you be* when you come in, and blessed *shall you be* when you go out.

<sup>7</sup> "The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. <sup>8</sup> "The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. <sup>9</sup> "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. <sup>10</sup> "So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you. <sup>11</sup> "The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. <sup>12</sup> "The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. <sup>13</sup> "The LORD make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe *them* carefully, <sup>14</sup> and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

The curses **come to Israel when they *refuse to obey Gods commandments:***

<sup>15</sup> "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you..."

So, I close this Chapter to speak to those Christians who call themselves "spiritual Israel" and "spiritual Jews." All the more you should be keeping Gods Torah ("*...being careful to do all His*

***commandments which I command you today...***), else you be cursed as was physical Israel was when they disobeyed!

In other words, if you think you are a “spiritual Jew” or “spiritual Israel” – *act like it* and be obedient to God’s commandments as He gave them to Israel in that day!

Now, I may be sounding harsh, but you can’t have it both ways.

## Chapter Seven - The One Olive Tree: Israel

In Chapter Five I made a statement that I want to come back to:

As believers in him (Jesus), we are all made part of that same commonwealth (Ephesians 2:11-22) whether we are Jew or non-Jew.

To his Gentile readers, Paul writes in Ephesians 2:

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands--* <sup>12</sup> *remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, **excluded from the commonwealth of Israel**, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.* <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus *you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances*, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus establishing peace,* <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. <sup>17</sup> AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; <sup>18</sup> for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow *citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,* <sup>20</sup> having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone,* <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

He is saying (and I'm paraphrasing):

- 1) **You Gentiles were once lost and going to Hell without any hope whatsoever.**
- 2) **You were not a part of the Covenants of promise.**
- 3) **You were not a part of the Commonwealth of Israel.**
- 4) **You were separate from Christ.**
- 5) **BUT NOW (verse 13) you who were once "far off" have been "brought near" by the blood of Christ.**

- 6) **Who brought down the barrier of the dividing wall and abolished in Himself the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances.**
- 7) **He did this in order to create in union with Himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom.**
- 8) **No longer are you strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household. In other words, you are joined together with all of Israel, God's household!**

What Jesus did was **not** getting rid of the Law, but getting rid of the enmity that separates Jew and non-Jew in Him!

This does NOT mean that we can do just whatever we like now!

The motif portrayed by Paul in this passage is of the “dividing wall” that separated the non-Jew from Temple worship.

When I was in Israel, I saw the model (below) made of stone of the Temple in Jerusalem. Surrounding the Temple was a dividing wall that separated not only the Jew from the non-Jew, but also separated the women from the Temple worship.



**Figure 1 Temple Model in Jerusalem**

It was known as the “mechitzah.” Look at the picture of the model above and you will see a grayish color wall surrounding the Temple itself. (see arrow).

The purpose of that wall was to keep the Gentiles and women from entering the Temple.

On the wall of the Mechitzah, were the words warning the Gentile from entering (see figure below), saying: "No Gentile may enter beyond the dividing wall into the court around the Holy Place; whoever is caught will be to blame for his subsequent death."



Figure 2 Temple Wall Warning

It must be recalled that the Apostle Paul got into trouble in Jerusalem on his last trip because it was thought that he had brought a Gentile past the dividing wall into the Temple (Acts 21:28-29!

It was this wall that Paul was metaphorically alluding to his Ephesian readers! It is this wall that Jesus broke down! And He broke this wall down by His blood!

The reason for this is so that we all could become one person in Him!

He is true Israel and both Jew and non-Jew are grafted into Him!

Back to Romans 11, where Paul speaks of his Jewish people:

<sup>11</sup> I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. <sup>12</sup> Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! <sup>13</sup> But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, <sup>14</sup> if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. <sup>15</sup> For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the

dead? <sup>16</sup> If the first piece *of dough* is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too.

<sup>17</sup> But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; <sup>21</sup> for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. <sup>22</sup> Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree?

<sup>25</sup> For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; <sup>26</sup> and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

Let me make it perfectly clear, there is only ONE Olive tree and Jesus is it! He is physical AND spiritual Israel! He is the fulfillment of the Torah that was given to physical Israel, which they broke!

Today, the Church thinks it is "spiritual Israel" and that physical Israel, the physical descendants of Jacob (Israel) is another Israel.

This is NOT what Paul is teaching! There is only the Israel of God and Jesus IS that Israel.

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies relating Himself to Israel:

- 1) Going to Egypt – "Out of Egypt I have called My Son." (Matthew 2:15 cf. Hosea 11:1)

- 2) 40 days and 40 nights in the Wilderness – a type of the 40 years that Israel spent in the Wilderness. (Matthew 4:1-2 cf Numbers 14:34)
- 3) Being Tested in the Wilderness – as was Israel in the Wilderness. (Matthew 4:3-11 cf Deuteronomy 8:16)
- 4) Baptism – Going through the waters, as did Israel in the Exodus. (Matthew 3:13-17 cf 1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Now, it is to Jesus that we are grafted in to Him (John 15:5): "I am the **vine**, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

### **True Israel IS Jesus!**

It is through Him that we all (Jew and non-Jew) are saved, sanctified and one day it is through Him that we will be glorified.

He should be the focus of our walk and our talk – and since He walked out Torah perfectly, so should we want to walk out our lives in Him.

Now, back to the Pauline metaphor of the wall surrounding the Temple: if this wall that kept the Gentile believer from the Temple was metaphorically broken down by Jesus, what should that allow the Gentile believer to do that he previously would not have been able to do?

The answer: ENTER THE TEMPLE!

That is, what prevented him (or her) from entering the Temple is no longer a barrier. Theoretically, the Gentile believer would want to go all the way in to the presence of God in worship!

As the writer of the book of Hebrews (10:19) said, "Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the **holy place** by the blood of Jesus..." we should now want to go in all the way!

But, that's not how the Church has it! Quite the opposite: Now that the dividing wall has been broken down, the Gentile Church now flees from the worship as God commanded it be done in His Word.

Instead of following Gods commandments, Gods statutes, Gods holy days, Gods system of worship, as stated in the Torah she has imported into herself

from the pagan religions that she has absorbed, the pagan feast days, and even some of the practices of those pagan religions.

That's why she has Christmas (Saturnalius), Easter (Astarte), "Sun" Day (the worship of the Sun god) and Halloween (Samhain - All Saints Day).

The Catholic Church, from which all the Protestant Churches are her daughters has Mother of God worship, prayers to the saints, icon veneration, prayer beads, and other practices that also come from pagan worship practices.

Such things should not be.

What started out as a "Jewish" (more aptly called "Biblical") faith in the First Century has now become anything but that.

We in the Body of Christ have been guilty of syncretism. We have merged into our faith practice a walk that was not ever a part of the original faith as given to us by the Lord or His Disciples.

Whereas God commanded us to be a holy people and even gave us His Son to walk it out because we couldn't, we have adopted unholy things into our faith! That's not how Jesus walked!

**As people who obey God, do not let yourselves be shaped by the evil desires you used to have when you were still ignorant. On the contrary, following the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in your entire way of life; since the Tanakh says, "You are to be holy because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16)**

We need to begin once more to walk like Him!

Literally, God is saying, "Be separate from the world, for I am separate from the world." Holiness is separateness from the world and its lusts. True holiness is being in the world, but not having friendship with the world system which is based on selfishness and greed.

1 John 2:15-17 says:

**Do not love the world or the things of the world. If someone loves the world, then love for the Father is not in him; because all the things of the world – the desires of the old nature, the desires of the eyes, and the pretensions of life – are not from the Father but from the world. And the world is passing away, along with its desires. But whoever does God’s will remains forever.**

**You unfaithful wives! Don’t you know that loving the world is hating God? Whoever chooses to be the world’s friend makes himself God’s enemy! (James 4:4)**

Sadly, many believers attempt to walk a razor thin line – trying to be friends with the world *and* with God. They compromise what they know to be true from the Word of God and act like the world.

They are living in the world much as Lot was living in Sodom: Lot didn’t start out *living* in Sodom, he set his tents *just outside* the city (Genesis 13:12). Yet, the next time we see him mentioned in Scripture, he is living *in* the city (Genesis 14:12). You would think that this was bad enough, but when we see his name once again in the Scripture, he is now sitting in the *gates* of the city (Genesis 19:1)! This means that he was regarded as an elder of the city, for it was in the gates of the city that the elders would sit to judge between individuals coming to them for justice. Lot was no longer simply a visitor or stranger in Sodom, he was part of the citizenry!

Did the ungodliness of Sodom rub off on Lot and his family? Two passages indicated it had: The first, when the angels sent to rescue Lot and his family came, the men of the city wanted to have sexual relations with these angels. Lot does not simply say, “No way. Get out of here!” But, instead, he offers his virgin daughters to these men to do with as they like. The second passage was after their rescue from Sodom when Lot’s daughters made their father drunk with wine and had sexual relations with him, producing offspring by their father.

From these passages, it is important to realize that you can’t walk in a pigpen without getting some of its filth on you. A believer in Jesus who thinks they can walk in worldly ways without getting defiled is deceiving him or herself.

Yet, over the centuries, the church has incorporated within itself many of the worldly ways and has played the “harlot” to the nations. From the passage in Revelation 18:1-5, it is evident that *some* of God’s people are found within this harlot Babylon, or God wouldn’t have to call them *out* of her. This doesn’t mean that the true believers found within the harlot *are* harlot Babylon, but rather they are a part of this religious system and need to come out of her.

God has always warned His people against the religious practices of the nations – Exodus 23:24, 32-33; 34:12 and Deuteronomy 7:2-6, 25-26. Yet, so often the Jewish people fell into the pagan practices of the nations surrounding them. When they did practice the religious observances of these nations, God likened her to a prostitute – Ezekiel 16, Hosea, etc.

So, does God offer comforting, kind words for them so that they would continue their rebelliousness? No. Instead, we see a different word coming from God to His chosen people (Jeremiah 2:20-3:10). Following are a few of these passages:

**For long ago I broke your yoke; when I snapped your chains, you said, “I won’t sin.” Yet on every high hill, under every green tree, you sprawled and prostituted yourself.**

(Verse 20)

**How can you say, “I am not defiled, I have not pursued the ba’alim?” Look at your conduct in the valley, understand what you have done.**

**You are a restive young female camel, running here and there, wild, accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her lust – who can control her when she’s in heat?**

**Males seeking her need not weary themselves, for at mating season they will find her.**

(Verse 23-24)

**Adonai says, “If a man divorces his wife, and she leaves Him and marries another man, then if the first one marries her again, that land will be completely defiled. But you prostituted yourself to many lovers, yet you want To return to me?” says Adonai.**

(Chapter 3, verse 1)

If God spoke this way to His people Israel, whom He loved and called “chosen,” should He only speak sweet things to His church (who should know better) when we do the same things?

As had occurred with Israel over the centuries, the Body of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, has incorporated into its religious observances the practices *forbidden* by God – the practices of the neighboring nations. As a result the church universal is defiled and in need of cleansing, just as Israel was.

Yet, in spite of what He said in Jeremiah, He still invites His people to repentance (Jeremiah 3:12-4:12).

**Go and proclaim these words toward the north:**

**“Return, backsliding Isra’el,” says Adonai. “I will not frown on you, for I am merciful,” says Adonai. “I will not bear a grudge forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you have committed crimes against Adonai your God, that you were promiscuous with strangers under every green tree, and that you have not paid attention to my voice.” Says Adonai. (Chapter 3, verses 12 and 13)**

Just as God was inviting Israel to repent and put away her foreign gods and practices, so is He speaking to the believing community today. The passage cited earlier on page 3 (Revelation 18), speaks to *every* believer in Christ to look at their practice of faith and see if they are found within this “Babylonian religious system.” It is incumbent upon every true believer who loves God to hear this call and remove himself or herself from the harlot, though it may be costly. If not, they, too, will be a participant in Babylon’s sins and will receive of her plagues.

The time of the end is near, and more than ever the Bride of Messiah needs to “**make herself ready**” (Revelation 19:7) by once again embracing the holiness that God requires of her as found in His commandments, a holiness that is not in name, but in truth.

In reality, true holiness is not simply a title as some think but a state of being. God does not merely want us to be *called* “holy,” but God wants us to *be* holy or separate from the world and how it operates. We are to pursue holiness as a people (Hebrews 12:14), for without that holiness, no one will

see God. The question is, "How are we to be truly holy, to be what God wants us to be?"

Since God doesn't change, neither does His holiness or standards of holiness:

**"For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."**

Malachi 3:6

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 7: <sup>12</sup> "So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."

The Law isn't "legalism" it is holy and it shows us how to walk holy lives, just like Jesus did!

It is important to realize that though the death of Jesus fulfilled the penalty of the Law for all who placed their trust in Him; *obedience* to the Law of God is *proof* that one is a believer in Him. When we received Jesus as our Savior and Lord, the Law – the very same Law once written on parchment and tablets of stone – is now written in our hearts and minds, not "dispensed away with."

And this is where those who are Jews and non-Jews in Jesus fit in. The essence of the "New" of the New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34:

<sup>31</sup> "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. <sup>33</sup> "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup> "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Notice that the “New Covenant” is made with only two groups of people: the House of Israel (and all those who are grafted into her, regardless of their ethnic origins), AND the House of Judah (the Jewish people). You’re either in one group or the other if you are partakers of this New Covenant.

Anyone NOT found in one of these two groups is lost. You are either of Israel or of Judah if the New Covenant pertains to you.

If now you discover you are in one of these two groups as a believer in Jesus who instituted the New Covenant in Luke 22:20, when He said, "**This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood**" then this New Covenant pertains to you.

The reason for the New Covenant is as explained by the writer of the Book of Hebrews (chapter 8):

<sup>7</sup> For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. <sup>8</sup> For finding fault with them, He says, "BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD, WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;

<sup>9</sup> NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS  
ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND  
TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT;  
FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT,  
AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

<sup>10</sup> "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL  
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:  
I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,  
AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS.  
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,

AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

<sup>11</sup> "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,  
AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,'  
FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,  
FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

<sup>12</sup> "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,  
AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

<sup>13</sup> When He said, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

A quick thing to note about the above passage: Even by the time of the writing of the book of Hebrews (69 AD?) the older covenant wasn't done away with! It was still "becoming" and "growing" and "ready to" disappear! This means that the "Old" Testament was NOT done away with then, some 39 years AFTER the death and resurrection of Jesus! And it is not done away with today!

How do I know that?

Well, from verse 11:

AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,  
AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,'  
FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,  
FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

Not everybody knows the Lord yet! When the New Testament comes into its fullness, you won't need Bible teachers, Pastors, Professors, Bible students, Rabbis, etc. because EVERYONE will KNOW the Lord!

As long as you see people occupying these positions, we're still in the "Old" Testament/"New" Testament transition!

So, why the need for a "New" Covenant?

According to the writer of the book of Hebrews there was a need for a new covenant because there was a fault with the first one (verses 7 & 8): <sup>7</sup> "For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second."

So, what was wrong with the first covenant? Was it too hard for the people to keep? Was it too legalistic?

No, the problem was in the people: <sup>8</sup> "For finding fault with them..." <sup>9</sup> **FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT**, and I did not care for them, says the Lord."

The nature of God is Spirit. That is also the nature of the Torah (Law) Romans 7:14, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin."

The reason we don't keep the Law, according to Paul is that we aren't spiritual by nature. So God remedies the fault of our not keeping His covenant by writing His Laws into our hearts and minds.

Why? So that we could keep it!

Paul describes a battle going on inside of him (which of course, extends to us) in Romans 7. Listen to what he has to say here:

<sup>14</sup> For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. <sup>15</sup> For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good. <sup>17</sup> So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good *is* not. <sup>19</sup> For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. <sup>20</sup> But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. <sup>22</sup> For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, <sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

There's the battle in his mind – upon which in the New Covenant – the Law is written upon and the battle of his flesh, which he is born with.

Though he wants to do good (follow the Torah which is good...) he finds himself doing just the opposite. This is because the flesh wants to follow its own Torah and wages war against the Law of God which is written in his mind.

Thus, the Battle of the Two Torahs! One, which brings life (God's Torah) and the other which brings sin and death (the Torah of the Flesh).

Which one wins? Paul answers that in Romans 8:

<sup>2</sup> For the ***law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*** has set you free from ***the law of sin and of death***. <sup>3</sup> For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup> For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup> For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, <sup>7</sup> because ***the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God***, for it is not even able *to do so*, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

If you wonder why you don't want to obey God's commandments, then the above passage answers it for you: ***the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God***.

It is NOT the Holy Spirit who is making you rebel against God's Laws! In fact, He had a part in conveying the Law to the writers of the Scripture!

According to Peter, in 1 Peter 1, it was the Holy Spirit that inspired men to write the entire Bible: <sup>20</sup> "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of

Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, <sup>21</sup> for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

If the Holy Spirit had a problem with the Law, then why did He allow it to be written?

If He had a problem with the Father and the Son regarding the Law, He could have said, “No way! I’m not going to convey that legalistic system to men! I disagree with You Both regarding this Law!”

No, if that would have happened, we would have a BIG problem, since God would be divided and a divided kingdom cannot stand (Matthew 12:25, 26).

I once had a person in my congregation that told me that the Holy Spirit told him to divorce his wife. I told him that cannot be possible, since God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) and His Spirit would not cause you to violate His Word.

He went ahead anyway and divorced his wife, contrary to Scriptural counsel.

Nope. It wasn’t the Holy Spirit that caused him to violate God. It was his fleshly mind.

When we violate or ignore the keeping of God’s Laws it is definitely NOT His Holy Spirit. It is your fleshly mind. Furthermore, it is not the Laws of God that are the law of sin and death: It is what Paul said in Romans 7:23 “I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.”

The law of sin and death is in your members! It is NOT God’s Laws! God’s Laws are spiritual and as such, can only be kept through the power of the Spirit! Period.

Galatians 5:

<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do

the things that you please. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

I want to emphasize at this point that you cannot be “under” something that is within you! If you are under a roof, it cannot be in you. If you are under an umbrella, it cannot be in you.

If you are under the Law, it is not within you – and you should be worried, because God says that the nature of the New Covenant is that it is going to be placed in you.

In the New Covenant God takes the His Law that He had already given and writes it *upon the hearts and minds* of His believers (Jeremiah 31:31-34; cf. 8) so that we will *keep* it. It was given because people did not faithfully keep the Older covenant; a covenant external to them. So God created this new covenant, written upon a heart of flesh and with a new Spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27) to cause His people to keep His Law:

**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit inside you; I will take the stony heart out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them.**

If we look at the life of Jesus, we will see that He had just this type of heart and Spirit. He gave us the example we are to emulate: (1 John 2:3-6) if we walk by the Spirit, we will not carry out the desires of the flesh (i.e. “sin”) (Galatians 5). Jesus kept the law perfectly; He always kept His Father’s commandments. To be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2) it was required that He fulfill the Law in absolute perfection. If the Church’s assertion is true: that keeping the Law is “legalism” and that those who keep the law are “legalists,” it logically follows that Jesus must have been the *perfect legalist*, since He kept the Law perfectly! (Sorry folks, I don’t think so.)

Instead, I believe Jesus gave us the example of how a Spirit-empowered believer *should act* without having to be provoked by a law external to Himself to control His behavior (Luke 4:1, 14). The Law was *in* Him, (the essential element of the New Covenant proclaimed by Jeremiah 31:33), and was so much a part of Him (remember, this is God’s nature) that He lived the Law naturally – without legalism! As Messiah Jesus kept His Father’s

commandments and abode in His Father's love, so we, too, must keep His commandments and abide in His love. This is what it means to "know God."

## Chapter Eight - So, Where are we Today?

In the Body of Christ today, we are far, far away from the faith of the Lord Jesus and His Disciples.

Yet, we all tend to think that the faith we now practice is one that follows the model set by the First Century believers in Jesus.

We warmly think of the manger scene at Christmas and the Baby Jesus to remind ourselves of His birth. We remember the resurrection of Christ on Easter and fondly observe the Easter Sunrise Services of our churches and, in fact, we celebrate our Sabbath on Sunday in honor of the resurrection.

To us these holy observances bring us closer to Jesus in our minds and hearts and draw our families together, if even for a brief moment.

Nevertheless, for most of us, it would probably surprise us that *none* of these practices were found in the First Century church and would not be found in the church until many years (even centuries) after the death of the Apostles.

In fact, it would not be until the Second Century, when the Gentile “Church Fathers” came into leadership into what is now called the “church” that practices and thoughts began to come into the church that were *outside* of what was once a strictly Hebraic (“Jewish”) faith.

### Christmas and Sunday Observance

Take Christmas, for instance. According to many scholars, the celebration of peoples’ “birthdays” was a Roman practice, not a Jewish practice, and therefore the celebration of the birth of Christ was unheard of for well over the first hundred years of the life of the church.

It would not be until the *Philocalian Catalogue* in 354<sup>24</sup> that the first mention of Christmas as a festival of the church on December 25 would be referred to. The Christian Sunday was not made a “Day of rest” until Constantine decreed it in AD 321.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity*, copyright 1977, Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, pg. 147

<sup>25</sup> *IBID*, page 122

Christianity, a persecuted minority faith at Constantine's conversion in AD 312, had become the religion of the Empire by the end of the century. The bishop of Rome, whose leadership in the church had been largely a primacy of honor, now claimed supreme and universal authority in Christian lands, and began to make good this claim in the West, at least over the church.<sup>26</sup>

It is important to understand Constantine's previous religion, the worship of the Unconquered Sun...Constantine continued to identify the sun with the Christian God in some way – a belief made easier by the tendency of Christian writers and artists to use sun imagery in portraying Christ... When in 321 Constantine made the first day of the week a holiday, he called it 'the venerable day of the Sun' (Sunday)...The Christian church took over many pagan ideas and images. From sun-worship, for example, came the celebration of Christ's birth on the twenty-fifth of December, the birthday of the Sun.<sup>27</sup>

To show his homage to the Sun God, on the coinage of Constantine's reign, Constantine has his image on the head and on the tail of the coin, is the image of "Sol Invictus," the Invincible Sun.



Figure 2 - Sol Invictus

In the late third century came the first deliberate attempts by Christian missionaries to 'baptize' features of pagan religions and thus overcome them by absorbing them into Christianity. Churches took over from temples, martyrs replaced the old gods in popular devotion, and the festivals of the Christian year took the place of the high-days and holy days of paganism.<sup>28</sup>

Not only were religious practices from pagan religions adopted into the church, but words as well.

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<sup>26</sup> IBID, page 130

<sup>27</sup> IBID, page 131

<sup>28</sup> IBID, page 88

## “Easter”

The name ‘*Easter*’ originated with the names of an ancient Goddess and God. The word Easter derives from the name of a goddess Astarte, the Queen of Heaven and is connected with Baal worship.



Figure 3 - Astarte, Ishtar

The Venerable Bede, (672-735 CE.) a Christian scholar, first asserted in his book *De Ratione Temporum* that Easter was named after Eostre (a.k.a. Eastre). She was the Great Mother Goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Similarly, the ‘*Teutonic dawn goddess of fertility [was] known variously as Ostare, Ostara, Ostern, Eostrā, Eostre, Eostur, Eastrā, Eastur, Austron and Ausos.*’<sup>29</sup>

The Christian Easter is the replacement of the Biblical Passover feast of the Hebrew people and is meant to honor the resurrection of Jesus.

So ingrained is the word in Christian culture that by the time of the King James Version translation, the word is substituted in Acts 12:4 for the Greek word meaning Passover:

**And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after *Easter* to bring him forth to the people. (KJV)**

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<sup>29</sup> *Asherah and Easter*, Larry Boemler, Biblical Archaeology Review, Vol. 18, Number 3, 1992-May/June

## **The Christian attitude toward the “Law”**

The practice and verbiage of the church wasn't the only thing affected. In the First Century, during the lives of the Apostles there were “myriads of Jewish believers who were zealous for the Law (Torah)” (CJB Acts 21:20).

When these believers had heard that Paul had come back to Jerusalem, they would be seriously concerned about what they have heard about him. He had just finished his third and final missionary journey (56-58 AD). He is now arriving in Jerusalem for the last time in his life and would soon be taken captive and placed into the hands of the Gentiles.

Paul, in order to prove his own Torah observance and to put to rest some of the rumors of his teachings among the Gentiles, is asked to take the Nazirite vow along with four others who were already under the vow (Acts 21:23-26). He does so without objection and so proves his obedience to Torah in his own life.

Furthermore, as he defends himself under oath in trial before Felix in Acts 24:14 he reaffirms his belief in the Law and the prophets:

**"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets..." (CJB)**

Paul is obviously not anti-Law even though the church *still* continues to use Paul's writings to *defend* an anti-Law (anti-Torah) perspective (see Chapters 4 & 5). Something is not quite right here.

## **Is the Church today that of the Apostles?**

If you choose to study and learn from history: Obviously not. Many Christians today are totally unaware of, or know very little of, Church history and are surprised when they learn of how and when these non-Biblical practices came into the Church. However, it isn't simply *what* you know (or don't know) that's at issue here. The real issue is: what are *you* going to do with what you know that matters. The question is: is *where* we are as the Body of Christ now really where God *wants* us to be? Is the celebration of Christmas and Easter and other pagan holidays enfolded in the

trappings of Christian terminology acceptable in Gods' viewpoint? Is the anti-Torah position of the church really what the Apostles taught and practiced?

If you discover some truth in this study, what are you going to do with it? You could go, "Well, I know these things are not found in the original church, but so what? All my family practices them and it is so hard to change."

Yes, change *is* hard! Yet, each of us is called to choose for ourselves to search for and to live out the truth. It is easier to "keep on keeping on."

I am reminded of a true story that occurred near Webber Falls, Oklahoma, as recounted by Ryan Dobson in his book, *Be Intolerant*:

*On May 26, 2002, a towboat on the Arkansas River in Oklahoma accidentally pushed a barge into a concrete bridge support. The bridge was where Interstate 40 crossed the River. At the impact, a third of the bridge had collapsed. The problem was that people on the interstate couldn't see that the bridge was out. Fishermen in boats below watched in horror as car after car shot off the edge of the bridge at 70 miles an hour plunging 62 feet to the river. ... The fishermen immediately began pulling survivors out of the water.*

*But meanwhile cars keep dropping into the river. When they pulled a truck driver out of the water he shouted "Somebody stop the cars!"*

*So fisherman Alton Wilhoit grabbed a flare gun from his boat and ran up to the interstate, where another semi was headed for the bridge. Wilhoit fired the flare-it struck the truck right on the windshield.*

*The driver slammed on the brakes. The wheels locked up and the trailer came to a stop with the truck's front wheels hanging over the ledge. The driver threw it into reverse and pulled away effectively blocking the road and warning other drivers.<sup>30</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Ryan Dobson, *Be Intolerant*, copyright April 16, 2007, Tyndale House Publishers

Certainly when the flare struck the windshield of the truck headed for the bridge, the trucker was frightened and angry that something like that would happen to him as he was headed to his destination!

Likewise, we go down the road of life thinking everything is just fine with the direction we are going. Our eyes are focused on the goal of where we are headed, without us being able to see the bridge is out ahead.

If someone would have held a sign saying that the bridge was out, we would no doubt have driven right past them without so much as a thought. If they had spoken softly in kind, gentle, whispery words, “The bridge is out. Stop or you will die” we would not have listened and would have plunged to our own destruction.

Sometimes it takes a shock, something greatly out of the ordinary to force us to interrupt our routine in order to get us to listen and recognize the destruction that lies ahead.

Please believe me when I say this: I am not trying to write with an attitude to demean you or your faith. I truly recognize that you sincerely hold that faith and respect that you hold it. I am not claiming to have a corner on the truth, either.

I am, on the other hand, trying to shoot a flare across your “windshield” to share with you how much we need to get back to a Biblical faith – which necessarily doesn’t line up with the one portrayed by the Disciples in the First Century church.

These facts are fairly easy to study out on your own, *if you choose to do so*. It doesn’t take a lot of work to seek them out. Just like the bridge: when you see it is collapsed, you don’t have to analyze the bridge to recognize that it is collapsed. It *is* collapsed.

What you had to do was to see it collapsed in the first place...Then you had to come to a *complete stop* to avoid the consequences of that collapse.

The theology of the Church is bankrupt without all that preceded it. We need to recognize that. We have lost so many blessings because we are being disobedient, thinking we are obedient.

God does not want us to be in this position. He wants us to come out of this bankrupt religious system.

We are called out of this religious system, <sup>4</sup> **I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; <sup>5</sup> for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities..." (Revelation 18)**

It is evident from the call of this passage that there are those who truly have a heart for God and are true believers in Him who are found in this religious system – else, why the call? If there were no people of God found in her (harlot Babylon), God wouldn't have to call them out, would He? Just like Lot was found within the city of Sodom, and needed to come out from her in order to avoid destruction along with her, so we as believers need to come out of this system in order not to receive of her plagues.

Our choice is simple: We are to “Come out of” Babylon, or we shall receive of her plagues.

I need to say one more thing related to that passage. In the Book of Revelation there are two passages affirming two important things:

- 1) We are to keep the commandments of God
- 2) We are to keep faith in Jesus

One of these passages is Revelation 12:17, where it says: “So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”

The other is Revelation 14:12 – “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”

When something is said twice in Scripture, it is important to listen. What is God trying to tell us here? That His Law is done away with by faith in Jesus?

Or, as Paul says in Romans 3:31 – “Do we then **nullify** the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law.”

Let us then go on my brothers and sisters to doing *just* that!

## Chapter Nine -Where do we go From Here?

When all is said and done, it is up to the individual to choose what to do when presented with the facts. Perhaps it will be decided that he or she will continue on with their current practice, unaffected. Perhaps it will be that there will be a complete renunciation of pagan practices in their life.

Regardless, we will all have to account before God for what we did with the light we were given. For those of you reading this who have decided to do nothing, you will not have to go any farther in this book; it will not make a difference in your life anyway.

For those of you who decide to make partial or complete changes in the relationship expression of your faith in Jesus, I will attempt to help you get some direction of possible things that can be done. I will assume that the reader wishes to make a complete change in their practice of faith, which will require a necessary change in lifestyle.

Anyone wishing to stop short of any of these suggestions may do so, remembering that is not me they have to answer to, but the Lord. With that in mind, here are some things which may guide you:

**1. Stop observing the “obvious” pagan practices found within the Body of Messiah.** Those practices incorporated into the Body of Messiah from very early on with pagan origins have no place in the Body of Messiah: Christmas, Easter, Lent, Good Friday, Halloween (or All Saints’ Day), and the Sunday “sabbath” are all pagan in orientation and origin. They subvert the purity of the faith and contaminate its practitioners. [Once again, I would like to reiterate that one may worship ANY DAY, for in the Temple, worship occurred EVERY DAY. You may worship on Sunday, or Monday, or whatever day you choose, but Sabbath means “rest,” and one is to REST on the SEVENTH day of the week. I would also like to add another fact: the Hebrew reckoning of the names of the days of the week were, and still are, the numbers of the day – *except* the Sabbath (Shabbat). In other words: Saturday at sundown starts not Sunday, but “yom rishon” - “day one.” At sundown on what we now call Sunday, “day two” starts. Thus, reckoning of the days goes: “day one,” “day two,” “day three,” “day four,” “day five,” “day six” and finally “Shabbat.” For the Disciples to change the Shabbat is ludicrous, even if they could, because then you would have two days called

“Shabbat” in the Hebrew “Christian” community! How would they distinguish which day is the “real” Sabbath, especially since they still used the term, “the first day of the week” as evidenced by the Book of Acts? It could get very confusing.]

**2. Begin to observe the clearly Biblical commandments that can be seen in the Scripture** such as: observing the Biblical kosher laws, not committing forbidden sexual practices, not eating blood, and regarding the period of time from Friday evening to Saturday evening as the truth Sabbath in which work is not to be performed, as clearly specified. Then, as you read the Word, the Holy Spirit will bring to your attention other commandments and will show you sin in other areas of your life. As He does so, understand that He does this for your benefit and blessing.

**3. Begin to learn how to observe the Biblical feasts and Holy Days** and begin to incorporate them into your life to replace all the pagan traditions. You can do this by preferably visiting a Messianic Jewish synagogue, because of their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. If one is not available, call a local rabbi and find out how they’re celebrated. Perhaps they may let you observe their practice and you can go from there. (Remember, they may be observing these out of a legalistic perspective in keeping the Law. The Law is NOT to be kept this way, rather, out of love for the Lord). May I suggest reading Messianic Jewish books on God’s appointed feast days and times to help you?

**4. Begin to learn about the Jewishness of the faith** and go back to the Jewishness of the First Century believing community. If believers don’t insist upon this, their Pastors will continue the pagan traditions of the believing community; it is so much easier to “keep on doing things as usual.” “Tradition, Tradition, TRADITION!” (So the song goes...).

Expect persecution from fellow believers. The believing community is the only group that seems to kick, beat or shoot its wounded and hurting. Those who have lived righteously have always been misunderstood, stoned, or otherwise maligned for doing what God wanted them to do. 2 Timothy 3:12 speaks to the fact that **all who desire to live godly lives will be persecuted**. Sadly, it too often comes from our brethren in the faith. Stand firm and hang in there! Don’t give up on what the Bible says to do to show your love for God. You’ll probably not receive a pat on the back for keeping the Biblical kosher laws; instead you’ll find other Christians deliberately setting traps for

you to break it. Don't be surprised; this has happened to me and many others at times. When all is said and done, it is better to err on what the Word says than what man-made traditions say. Remember, they *won't* be standing there along side you when you are accounting for your deeds before Almighty God.

Finally, begin to use spiritual gifts as outlined in Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16. I believe these gifts will become much more pronounced and effective once the garbage of paganism is removed from your life. As we truly become more holy (separate) from the worldly practices, we will be more of an unclogged conduit for God's power to flow through. I believe the final Revival will be marked by a great outpouring of God's power that was not equaled, even by the early Believing community.

The most important question to ask at this point is: "Do we want to be used by God this way? If not, we can continue just as before and let Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome rule our religious practices. We're comfortable with these traditions; they've been around a long, long time; and we're doing okay (so we think).

On the other hand, if we choose to get our lives cleaned up, and we, as the "Bride making herself ready for the Bridegroom," go back to the Biblical principles outlined in the whole Bible, we will see God making manifest His love, grace and power in the lives of millions. The choice is not an easy one...choose wisely.

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